



## ADVICE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

It is the general policy of the Diocesan Advisory Committee to recommend that, where areas of the churchyard are set aside for the interment of cremated remains, no individual memorials should be permitted to mark the place of interment of the ashes of individual deceased persons. Instead, the Committee recommends a single stone marker of good design, and the maintenance of a Book of Remembrance in the church. Parishes sometimes seem to find difficulty in knowing how to set about the provision of such a book. The following advice is only tentative and will need to be adapted to the circumstances of the individual parish.

The first necessity is to purchase a suitable book. Such a book is sold by SPCK and consists of pages of good calligraphic paper, bound in leather, with gold tooling on the *inside* of the cover, so that this is seen when the book is kept open in its glass case. It is, of course, possible to stamp the name of the parish in gold on the outside of the cover.

Most books are maintained on the basis of an opening of two pages or several openings of two pages, for every week of the year. It is therefore convenient if the book can be divided up into multiples of  $52 \times 2 = 104$  pages. The parish should work out carefully, on the basis of experience, how many interments may need to be recorded in the foreseeable future. There is likely to be an increase in the interment of cremated remains, but if there are only three or four such funerals a year, there is no point in providing space for 30 or 40 such funerals. On the other hand, if such funerals are frequent, it will be necessary to choose a book that will allow the amount of room required for, let us say, the next 50 years, as there would naturally be a sense of grievance if the book had to be closed for lack of space and a new one provided in less than that time. The parish needs to establish, in conjunction with its chosen calligrapher how many lines should be allowed for an entry and how many names can therefore be entered on a single page, allowing sufficient space between each entry. The DAC maintains a list of artists and craftsmen who are known to have worked successfully in churches and you may therefore like to contact them for names of calligraphers that can undertake such work.

The book should then be entrusted to the calligrapher, and every page, or every left hand page of every opening, should be inscribed with a date, at seven-day intervals: for example, **Week beginning 1 January**, **Week beginning 8 January**, etc. Alternatively, of course, the book may consist of  $366 \times 2 = 742$  pages, allowing an opening for every day of the year, in which case someone will need to turn a page every day. It will probably be helpful if, at the same time, the first page under each date is marked out in pencil with the space allowed for each entry and guidelines for writing.

It is very important to establish at the outset what kind of inscription may be permitted. Obviously the christian names and surname are essential and the decision has to be made whether the surname comes first, with a decorative initial, which makes it easy to find names, or whether the christian names come first which is probably more attractive and less "official" in appearance. Dates of birth and death are also essential. It is then usual to allow two or three lines for distinctions and decorations, some indication of the person's career, some indication of his relationship to the bereaved. Such details make a book interesting.

A rule should be made, from the start, either to permit or to exclude pious quotations, either from scripture or from poetry or from the fancy of the bereaved: while such quotations are often pleasing to the bereaved, they do not always make interesting reading for those who look at the book in future years, and may sometimes tend to detract from its dignity.

Undoubtedly, the most important decision to make in establishing a Book of Remembrance is in the choice of calligrapher. Such a calligrapher is likely to be, and ideally should be, responsible for the book for many years to come. (This makes it unwise to choose a calligrapher for a new book who is of an advanced age.) The aim should be to choose somebody who can write a clear, legible letter, of a standard kind. Of course, every individual calligrapher will write differently, and his or her work can often be recognisable at a glance. Nevertheless, no calligrapher is immortal, and it will almost certainly be necessary for another to take on where one leaves off. Anything quirky, or eccentric, in the form of letters should therefore be avoided.

Very few people can write "Old English" or "Gothic" text to a satisfactory standard, and it is better avoided as too "churchy"; the plain Round Hand as taught by Edward Johnstone, or Chancery Italic, are to be preferred. But Uncial or Lombardic initials have a good effect.

The traditional colour of black ink for the majority of the text, with red for the initials, should be adhered to, as it is both legible and cheerful. If a third colour is to be permitted, for instance for names or for subsidiary initials, it should probably be blue. Allowance should be made for the fact that the contrast between red ink and white paper, is not as forceful as that between black ink and white paper, so that rubricated initials ought probably to be written more heavily than the rest of the text.

Consideration may then be given to the question of decoration. The most important decoration in such a book must be contributed by the calligraphy itself, and in particular the initial or initials of each entry, which may be in red or in gold, and the heading with the date at the top of each opening or page. Other decorations are possible. Coats of Arms or Crests, which must be heraldically correct, regimental badges, pictures of medals and other decorations, all add greatly to the beauty of the page, especially if real gold leaf and aluminium leaf are used, though this will add considerably to the expense of the entry.

Floral decorations are often used and the parish might well consider allowing the first page of each date to be decorated from the start with seasonally appropriate flowers; and floral decoration may also be added to each individual entry at the choice of the bereaved. But, if such work is to be permitted it must be to the highest standard, and therefore will inevitably be costly.

There may need to be a rule about other decorations. Emblems that express the work or the leisure interests of the person commemorated may add greatly to the interest or attractiveness of the book, but, if they are allowed, they may eventually give rise to controversy and dispute if things considered unsuitable for the book are asked for. Probably when it comes to the question of inscriptions and the suitability of decorations, the decision will have to be clearly entrusted either to the incumbent alone, or the incumbent assisted by two members of the PCC, whose decisions will have to be accepted as final.

A book produced along these lines can be a thing of real beauty and a matter of interest for future generations. There is no need to be unduly economical about it, as those who wish to have an inscription placed in it will generally be willing to spend a fair sum to commemorate their departed. The initial cost of the book itself, and of the preparation of the individual pages, ought to be allowed for in the charge that is made for placing an entry in it. It should be remembered that in most cases the bereaved will have been spared the expense of an inscribed stone tablet, which they would probably have preferred but which they will not now have to pay for; and the cost of any entry can be related to that saving.